



College of Dietitians of Ontario

PANDEMIC POLICY & PLANNING GUIDE

FOR

REGISTERED DIETITIANS IN ONTARIO

OCTOBER 2009

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I. INTRODUCTION

A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic of a disease. An influenza pandemic occurs when an influenza virus changes and becomes a new strain against which people have little or no immunity and this new strain is easily spread from person-to-person. A pandemic results in several simultaneous epidemics and a vast number of illnesses.

This *Pandemic Policy & Planning Guide for Registered Dietitians in Ontario* (Guide) articulates College policies about what is expected from RDs during a pandemic. It also provides a framework and resources to support RDs in planning and dealing with a pandemic situation in both their professional practice and their personal life.

Although there is no way to predict if or when the next pandemic will occur, many health officials throughout the world believe that an influenza pandemic is imminent and planning must take place to deal with such an emergency. There is also an expectation among Canadian experts that the H1N1 virus will spread more quickly and be more virulent in the months ahead than in the past. The World Health Organization, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) have all released influenza pandemic documents to aid in the planning process and to address prevention, preparedness and operational activities for effective response and recovery.

It is important to recognize that as regulated health professionals, RDs and CDO have a role to play in managing the pandemic health threat that will affect both work and family life. During an infectious disease outbreak, such as an influenza pandemic, demands for care may result in RDs having to weigh the provision of such care against competing obligations of their own health and that of their family members. The policies and information in this Guide will assist RDs in exercising their professional judgment through the course of a pandemic.

In the current context of pandemic planning, there is a need for discussion and dialogue to protect the values of openness and transparency, as well as a need to be inclusive of employer and stakeholder views. It is expected that RDs will examine their current roles in the health care system and the possible impact a pandemic may have on their delivery of services.

II. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *Pandemic Policy & Planning Guide for Registered Dietitians in Ontario (Guide)* is a comprehensive resource about the professional and personal responsibilities of Registered Dietitians in Ontario. It includes information on preparing for a pandemic, how to stay informed, the role of organizations (including the responsibilities of CDO), and concludes with an extensive list of resources. It also outlines the expectations, obligations and concepts that a Registered Dietitian should consider when developing a professional practice pandemic plan or preparing a personal plan in the event of a pandemic.

Of critical importance are the following sections:

- III. College Expectations of Registered Dietitians
- IV. General & Ethical Obligations
- V. How Do Registered Dietitians Prepare for a Pandemic
- VI. How Registered Dietitians Can Help
- VII. Staying Up-to-Date

If you have any questions or require further clarification on any of the information mentioned in this *Guide*, please don't hesitate contact the College's Practice Advisor:

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416-598-1725 ext. 225 or toll free: 1-800-668-4990.

Use this guide on-line and link directly
to the electronic references
at www.cdo.on.ca

III. COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS OF REGISTERED DIETITIANS

This section articulates the CDO policy about what Registered Dietitians are expected to do during a pandemic or an outbreak of a serious infectious illness such as H1N1.

A. Provide Ethical, Competent and Safe Professional Services

- 1. Acquire the competence to carry out work tasks that are outside of your normal scope of practice.** During a pandemic, RDs may be asked to perform tasks outside of their usual dietetic scope of practice. In accepting these tasks, RDs need to assess their competence and take appropriate steps to acquire competence in a particular area, such as screening for flu symptoms. In addition, RDs need to take into account general and ethical obligations as outlined in sections IV and VI of this resource.
- 2. Fulfill your professional commitment to your clients and the profession.** During a pandemic outbreak, the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Dietetics Act* and other laws affecting professional practice will continue to be in place.
- 3. Base practice and personal decisions on expert, evidence-based information as issued by public health and government officials.**
- 4. Follow directives from your Employer, and the Public Health and Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care officials.** (See “General & Ethical Obligations”, page 6, and “How Registered Dietitians Can Help”, page 10).

B. Be Informed & Prepared

In addition, Registered Dietitians are expected to be prepared to prevent the spread of illness and to assist their clients.

5. Get Informed

This *Pandemic Policy & Planning Guide for Registered Dietitians in Ontario* is the first step towards becoming more informed about the influenza pandemic and the resources which provide accurate and current information.

6. Have a Plan

Make a plan both professionally and personally using these helpful resources:

- **Consult your employer’s pandemic plan and become familiar with these facility protocols.**
- **MOHLTC Personal and Family Care education module**
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/PersonalAndFamilyCareRev2.html
- **MOHLTC Be Prepared: Make a Plan**
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pub/prep/broc_plan_010606.pdf
- **Personal Emergency Kit Checklists**
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pub/prep/broc_clist_010606.pdf

- **Your H1N1 Preparedness Guide**
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/guide/index-eng.php>
- **Hand Washing Information**
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/emerg_kit/pdf/kit_handwash.pdf

7. Stay Informed

For current pandemic information:

- Consult the sources of up-to-date information provided by the MOHLTC (see page 11, “Staying Up-to-Date”);
- Pay attentive to your employer communications;
- Consult the CDO website for important pandemic updates.

8. Inform Your Clients

Refer to the “Public Facts Sheets” provided by the MOHLTC for reliable information to help you inform your clients (see page 8, “How Registered Dietitians Should Prepare for a Pandemic”).

IV. GENERAL & ETHICAL OBLIGATIONS

General Obligations

During a pandemic outbreak, the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and the *Dietetics Act* and other laws affecting health care delivery will continue to be in place. The College expects RDs to fulfill their commitment to their clients and the profession during an influenza pandemic by providing quality nutrition care that is within their individual competence.

Ethical Obligations

Registered Dietitians will be expected to make decisions based on their employer protocols, public health and governmental guidelines, the *Code of Ethics for the Dietetic Profession in Canada* and their own personal ethical framework to ensure they are practicing competently, ethically and safely during a pandemic.

It is recognized that the answers to ethical dilemmas relating to client care are often situational, and that the knowledge, skills and judgment of the individual will vary between professions and practice settings. As well, in an emergency, there may be a need for health care professionals to be reallocated from their usual roles and settings. During an influenza pandemic, RDs may be asked to perform tasks outside of the dietetic scope of practice. While personal competence may restrict certain practices, RDs need to consider how they can gain competence in a particular area to support their workplace, their clients and other stakeholders in a time of need. Above all, RDs need to follow directives their employer, public health and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care during a pandemic.

During a pandemic, governments and public health authorities will have to make difficult decisions (e.g., access to vaccines and anti-virals, reallocation of people and resources, etc.). Members of the public, health care workers and organizations are more likely to accept the difficult decisions that must be made if the decision-making processes are open and transparent, reasonable, inclusive, responsive and accountable.

The MOHLTC has adopted an ethical framework for decision-making using the following ethical principles:

- Individual liberty
- Protection of the public from harm
- Proportionality
- Privacy
- Equity
- Duty to provide care
- Reciprocity
- Trust
- Solidarity
- Stewardship
- Family-centered care
- Respect for emerging autonomy

For more details on this ethical framework for decision-making, refer to *Chapter #2: "Roles, Responsibilities and Frameworks for Decision Making"*, section 2.5, MOHLTC's 2008, *Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic* at:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/ch_02.pdf

In addition to the MOHLTC's ethical framework, the Canadian Program of Research on Ethics in a Pandemic (CanPREP) has developed an online tool to address the ethical challenges that arise for health care professionals in preparing for and responding to a pandemic. The CanPREP website functions as a communication hub, connecting members of the CanPREP team, policy makers, health care workers, and members of the public to each other and to the resources they need.

The CanPREP website contains a comprehensive and up-to-date database of ethics resources, including journal articles, media reports, and policy documents. Refer to the following link:

http://canprep.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=17&Itemid=47

V. HOW REGISTERED DIETITIANS SHOULD PREPARE FOR A PANDEMIC

Registered Dietitians should take the time to educate themselves about pandemics by knowing the facts to prepare professionally and personally for an influenza pandemic. Developing good infection control practices in your day-to-day activities is your first-line defense to help to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Proper hand washing as well as practicing coughing and sneezing etiquette that encourages sneezing into your sleeve are current evidence-based best practices, shown to be the most effective ways to reduce the spread of infections.

You can take proactive steps now to help prepare yourself and your family for a pandemic. These include making a plan and preparing a kit of resources available in the event a pandemic outbreak is declared (see “College Expectations of Registered Dietitians”, page 4).

Prevention Resources

a) Infection Control Guide

CDO’s *Infection Control Guide for Registered Dietitians in Community Settings* explains the best practices to help RDs apply appropriate infection control measures in their practice settings. It describes routine and additional infection control practices applicable to community clinics, family practices, private consulting practices, home care and other community settings where RDs are providing direct patient care. It is based on Health Canada’s recommendations as recognized by the MOHLTC and aligns with the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee’s (PIDAC) manual *Best Practices for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization in all Health Care Settings*.

Infection Control Guide for Registered Dietitians in Community Settings at

[http://www.cdo.on.ca/en/pdf/Resources/Practice%20Standards%20&%20Resouces/Workplace%20Issues/Infection%20Control%20Guide%20for%20Rd%20\(Nov%202006\).pdf](http://www.cdo.on.ca/en/pdf/Resources/Practice%20Standards%20&%20Resouces/Workplace%20Issues/Infection%20Control%20Guide%20for%20Rd%20(Nov%202006).pdf)

In addition WHO has developed a hand washing resource titled: *Your 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene*:

http://www.who.int/gpsc/tools/5momentsHandHygiene_A3.pdf

b) Fact Sheets for the Public

The MOHLTC has developed relevant fact sheets on the influenza pandemic to help inform the public. These fact sheets are available in 23 languages, including English and French, and address a number of topics including: how an influenza pandemic may affect Ontario; what you should include in your portable emergency kit; staying healthy and what to do to limit the spread of the virus. RDs may find these resources helpful when preparing their individual and family plans as well as helpful resources to inform clients seeking information on the topic of influenza pandemic. Refer to the link below to access the public fact sheets.

c) Fact Sheets for Health Care Professionals

The MOHLTC has also developed fact sheets for health care providers in consultation with the Ontario Health Plan for Influenza Pandemic Steering Committee. The information is intended to ensure that healthcare providers understand communications, roles and responsibilities and the overall strategy that will be employed in the event of an influenza pandemic. Topics include: How anti-viral medication will be used, which sources should health care providers refer to for accurate information, how Ontario will respond to an influenza pandemic, and what to do during an influenza pandemic if health professionals work alone. To access these fact sheets for both the public and health professionals, refer to the following link:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_materials.aspx#fs

d) Keeping Up-to-Date

In addition to the section titled “Staying-Up-to-Date” on page 11 of this resource, the MOHLTC posts current influenza pandemic information on their website for both the public and health professionals. This helpful resource will help you keep current with the government direction, planning activities and new developments.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu_09/provider/default.html

VI. HOW REGISTERED DIETITIANS CAN HELP

During an infectious disease outbreak, such as an influenza pandemic, demands for care may result in health care providers having to weigh the provision of such care against competing obligations to their own health and that of their family members. Registered Dietitians should consider their personal competencies relevant to the provision of care during an influenza pandemic and develop a plan for decision-making and involvement. In some cases, RDs may be asked to provide care in an area of dietetic practice that they do not commonly work in or assist in an area that may be outside of the dietetic scope of practice.

Individual circumstances will vary depending on practice settings and the nature of professional practice. There are no right or wrong answers; self assessment tools provide an opportunity to understand the skills and competencies that may be needed during an influenza pandemic and enable self assessment of how best to be of assistance.

A. Self-Assessment Tools

The MOHLTC's 2008 "Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic" provides resources to help health professionals complete a self-assessment of their own competencies for skills that may be helpful during a pandemic.

Chapter 8: "Optimizing Deployment of the Health Workforce" and Chapter 8A, Health Human Resources Planning Tool provides useful information and resources.

- Chapter 8:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/ch_08.pdf
- Chapter 8A:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/ch_08a.pdf

For the complete *Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic*, refer to:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/plan_full.pdf

B. Local Information Resources

Contact your local Public Health Unit to review the guidelines developed for managing emergencies in your municipality and find out how you may be of assistance in your community during an influenza pandemic. To access your local Public Health Unit, go to:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phuloc_mn.html

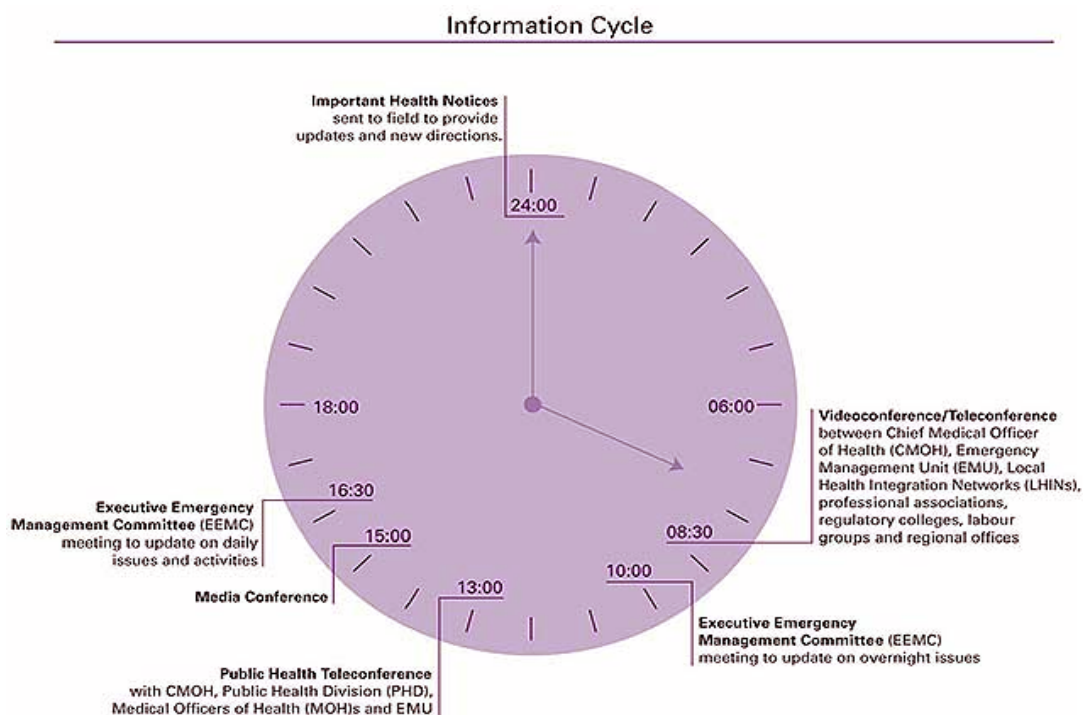
VII. STAYING UP-TO-DATE

A. MOHLTC Pandemic Information

- In the event that the MOHLTC declares that an influenza pandemic exists in Ontario, the most up-to date information will be available directly from the MOHLTC website:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pan_flu/
- The MOHLTC Emergency Management Branch will also maintain a Health Care Provider INFOline: 1-866-212-2272.
- Free advice and information will also be available via Telehealth Ontario at: 1-866-797-0000.

The Information Cycle

The MOHLTC has developed an *Information Cycle* for use during a health emergency. These briefings will be conducted at pre-determined times each day to ensure that health regulatory colleges, provider groups, the public and the media receive regular timely reports during an influenza pandemic.



Reference: MOHLTC. (2008). *Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic*, chapter 12. Available from: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/ch_12.pdf

B. CDO Updates

CDO will receive information briefings from the MOHLTC and then disseminate relevant data to RDs and other stakeholders in a timely manner via email, website postings and/or telephone recordings.

- Website: www.cdo.on.ca
- Phone: 416-598-1725 or toll free at 1-800-668-4990

VIII. ROLES OF ORGANIZATIONS

A. The Role of the College

When the MOHLTC declares an influenza pandemic outbreak CDO will implement the College's "Pandemic Plan." It may become necessary for CDO operations to move to a virtual format. Staff will be available to provide support via telephone, email, teleconference, and through the CDO website, in order to continue the operation of essential regulatory tasks and critical functions. CDO's telephone message will provide information on College operations as well as contact information for the MOHLTC INFOline.

During a pandemic, to the extent possible CDO will:

1. Ensure effective communication with members;
2. Continue to provide professional practice advice on regulatory issues and standards of practice;
3. Maintain a mechanism to register qualified applicants; and
4. Conduct other critical business functions as required to address regulatory issues.

In order to achieve these goals during an influenza pandemic, CDO will:

- Maintain the Practice Advisory Program;
- Maintain the Registration Program;
- Maintain communications with members and other stakeholders; and
- Maintain the Quality Assurance Program and professional conduct activities and reexamine what is continued as required if a severe influenza pandemic should arise.

The extent to which CDO can continue its operations will depend on a number of factors including: the severity of the pandemic, interruptions in important supplies and the effect of the pandemic on CDO's human resources. For this reason, CDO has identified communication as one of its four primary roles and has made it a priority during a pandemic. If the number of staff members is reduced, the College will realign its operations to support the above activities and the following priority services:

- Member communications, including ongoing website updates, practice advice and consultation about College guidelines as they relate to pandemic situations;
- Collaborative stakeholder relations pertaining to the pandemic;
- Investigations into serious allegations of unsafe practice; and
- Continuation of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee. All complaints will be addressed within the College's resource capacity.

Advisable that RDs have Accessible Email with the College

To receive important emails about a pandemic from CDO, please ensure your online member profile contains an email address that you can access if a widespread pandemic arises. It is advisable that if you do not have remote access for your work email, that you provide us with an accessible personal email address in your online profile.

B. The Role of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The MOHLTC is responsible for planning and managing the response to a pandemic in Ontario, including activities such as:

- Implementing provincial and national recommendations;
- Conducting surveillance activities;
- Coordinating investigations of outbreaks;
- Confirming pandemic activity in Ontario; and
- Providing guidelines and direction to local public health authorities and the health care system to ensure a consistent response across the province.

The MOHLTC has developed the *Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic* which describes in more detail the province's role and sets out expectations for local health authorities.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html

The MOHLTC will also maintain a **Healthcare Provider Hotline: Toll free: 1-866-212-2272**

C. The Role of an Employer

It is essential that businesses and organizations make reasonable efforts to protect the health of their employees, safeguard critical operations and plan for a pandemic. To assist organizations to prepare for and manage the impact of an influenza pandemic, the MOHLTC has published a *Guide to Developing a Workplace Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic*.

The guide follows a four-pronged strategy:

1. **Communication:** Opening lines of communication with employees, clients and external suppliers;
2. **Containment:** Containing the disease to the extent possible by reducing the spread at an organization's location(s);
3. **Continuity:** Maintenance and continuity of critical services, and;
4. **Personal Preparedness:** Preparing individuals for a pandemic. For individuals working as employees, it is important to be informed of your employer's pandemic plan and your role within that plan. Registered Dietitians who employ others need to consider the impact of a pandemic on the workplace setting and your employees and develop a plan on how this situation will be managed.

Guide to Developing a Workplace Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pub/pan_flu/work_guide.pdf

D. Employer Resources

Pandemic Planning Checklist for Employers

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pan_flu/employ/check.pdf

Entry Point Notice/Signage

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/updates/archives/hu_09/media/posters/stop/stop_english_20090504.pdf

Infection Control Poster

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/wpl/docs/posters/workplace_english_20090506.pdf

Hand washing

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/emerg_kit/pdf/kit_handwash.pdf

MOHLTC Guidance for Management of Patients with Influenza-like Illness (ILI) in Ambulatory Settings

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/health_notices/ihn_ambul_guidelines_20090603.pdf

MOHLTC Emergency Management Branch Employer Hotline:

1-866-331-0339.

IX. KEY PANDEMIC RESOURCES

The information pertaining to pandemic planning is extensive. CDO has compiled a resource list to assist members in their pandemic planning— both personally and professionally.

Note: The *Pandemic Policy & Planning Guide for Registered Dietitians in Ontario*, with live links, is available at: www.cdo.on.ca > Members > Standards, Guidelines & Policies

Key Pandemic Resources Include:

The World Health Organization (WHO)

The authority for health within the United Nations. WHO is responsible for directing and coordinating a global response to an influenza pandemic.

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

Public Health Agency of Canada

Communicates with key international organizations about pandemic outbreak activity world-wide. Responsible for coordinating a nation-wide pandemic response.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

“Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector”

The “Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector” maps out how Canada will prepare for and respond to an influenza pandemic.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cpip-pclcpi/index-eng.php>

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC)

Responsible for planning and managing the response to a pandemic in Ontario including: communicating information provincially to health care workers in partnership with various organizations such as professional group, regulatory health colleges (i.e., the College Dietitians of Ontario) and labour groups.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pan_flu/

MOHLTC Ontario Health plan for an Influenza Pandemic

Provides guidance on how Ontario’s health care system will respond to an influenza pandemic. It provides emergency planners, health care workers, government workers, and others with an overview of the OHPIP, and is designed to better inform local preparedness and response planning.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/ohpip2/plan_full.pdf

The MOHLTC Emergency Preparedness Planner – A Newsletter for the Health Sector

Features pandemic planning initiatives and best practices to promote health emergency planning and preparedness across Ontario.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/emerg_prep/emerg_planner.html

Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA)

CPHA has developed a “clearinghouse” of public health information from local, regional, provincial, national and international experts in an easy-to-access format. www.cpha.ca

Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee (PIDAC)

PIDAC provides a single-standing source of expert advice on infectious diseases for Ontario and advises the Chief Medical Officer of Health on prevention, surveillance and control measures necessary to protect the people of Ontario from infectious diseases.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/English/providers/program/infectious/pidac/pidac_mn.html

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Pandemic Planning

A Canadian federal government agency which serves to support the vision of eliminating all Canadian work-related illnesses and injuries.

<http://www.ccohs.ca/pandemic/>

Local Public Health Units

Provides community and public health information. Site provides maps and supporting contact information for public health units and Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs).

www.health.gov.on.ca/English/public/contact/phu/phuloc_mn.html

X. SUMMARY

In the event that a pandemic arises, it will inevitably impact the lives of all Registered Dietitians, their families, and their clients. It is essential for RDs to take the time to be familiar with the College pandemic policies, to be informed and to take proactive steps to develop a plan (both professionally and personally) and ensure that plans are in place in the event that a pandemic is declared.

CDO will update and support RDs in pandemic planning and will strive to keep members informed if an influenza pandemic should arise. Communication will be accomplished through resource links and postings on CDO's website, as well as email broadcasts to members and stakeholders, as warranted.

This document is based on resources shared by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, the College of Nurses of Ontario, the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. The College of Dietitians of Ontario gratefully acknowledges their contributions to the development of this resource.